

5 A Day Tips

Washing Fruits and Vegetables

We know that eating a variety of fruits and vegetables is an excellent way to get essential vitamins and minerals, fiber, and other substances that are important for good health. But what are the best ways to handle fresh fruits and vegetables before eating them? Here are some things to remember when preparing fruits and vegetables:

- Wash fruits and vegetables only before eating. If you wash the item before storage, it will spoil more quickly.
- The best way to wash the fruit or vegetable thoroughly is by gently rubbing the produce item under clean running tap water.
- If the fruit or vegetable is firm enough (like potatoes and squashes) and the skin will be eaten, then a scrub brush should be used to clean the surface.
- All fruits and vegetables should be washed even when the skin and rind are not eaten, such as oranges and melons.
- You do not need to use detergents or bleaches when washing any fruits or vegetables as they may stay on the surface and might be absorbed into the produce. Detergents and bleaches are not intended for use on foods and consuming them on fruits and vegetables may make you sick.

- Commercial produce sprays or washes are available in some supermarkets. However, governmental agencies do not recommend these sprays or washes. No washing method completely removes or kills all microbes, which may be present on the produce. Washing produce with tap water is adequate.
- Take off the outer leaves of leafy vegetables such as lettuce and cabbage before washing. Rinse leaves individually under clean running tap water and place in a salad spinner to dry.
- Cut out any bruised areas of the produce because bacteria may grow and cause illness if consumed.
- Keep raw meats separate from fresh fruits and vegetables. Use different cutting boards, knives, and utensils when preparing meals.
- Always wash cutting boards, knives, utensils, and your hands after handling raw meats and before handling fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Be sure to keep your refrigerator clean and cold. Wrap or cover any fruits or vegetables that you have cut and store them above raw meats.

